

Needed: Speed Bumps on Market Avenue

by Noreen Hughes

1 Have you ever tried to walk across Market Avenue on a busy afternoon, say about five o'clock? I did just the other day, and it was not a pleasant experience. As you know, Market Avenue is five lanes across—two in each direction plus a turn lane in the center—and typically the traffic in the inner lanes goes zipping by while the cars in the outer lanes go at a crawling pace in search of the few available parking spaces. The “Walk” sign stays on for such a short time a slow walker can easily get caught in the middle of the street while trying to cross, especially the many older pedestrians on Market carrying shopping bags from store to store. Even leaving aside the pedestrian issues, there are numerous accidents on Market when cars with impatient drivers try to pass each other or turn in front of each other. One driver is trying to get through the shopping district as fast as possible, and the other is slowing down to read a “Sale” sign. The result: Wham! Bang! Crunch!

My solution? It's simply this: Install speed bumps on Market Avenue in the shopping district. That would slow all cars down to 25 miles per hour or less and greatly reduce collisions. 2 Many of the drivers shopping on that street want to go slowly anyway; it's only the non-shoppers, the drivers just “passing through,” who would be slightly inconvenienced. But is it really an inconvenience to go a little more slowly? 3 Not if it means avoiding a possible accident. After all, which gets you to your destination faster: “crawling” at a mere 20 mph, or zooming through at 35 but crashing and having to wait for the police and the tow truck (and possibly having to go to the hospital)? 4

Speed bumps have been used successfully for years in many cities, including our own. 5 Several residential neighborhoods, including mine, have speed bumps to slow down traffic in areas where children play. Why can't the same solution be used in a commercial area, not because of children playing but because of cars smacking destructively into one another and pedestrians frightened to cross? 6

Police Chief Robertson said in the *Daily American* just the other day, “We have to clear an average of two ‘fender benders’ each day from Market Avenue, and that in itself ties up traffic for long periods.” 7 I suggest that that is too many accidents! If you agree with me and with Chief Robertson—if you want to keep our streets safe for walking and shopping and for responsible, law-abiding drivers—let's all begin to raise this issue at neighborhood council meetings and in the pages of the *American*. If speed bumps can save even one life, or prevent one serious injury, it will be worth it for our whole community. 8